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TAGS: AF OSCE PREL RS

SUBJECT: OSCE, RUSSIA AND SECURITY IN AFGHANISTAN

Classified By: CDA Carol Fuller for Reasons 1.5 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: Since 2007, despite a request from Afghanistan, Russia has obstructed efforts to have the OSCE conduct training inside Afghanistan, citing weak internal security as the main reason. Privately, Russian officials told us interagency differences have prevented a green light from Moscow. The incoming OSCE Chair Kazakhstan and the surrounding Central Asian countries, concerned by threats emanating from Afghanistan, would like to see greater OSCE efforts. OSCE activity, while minuscule in terms of resources, offers particular expertise in border security, provides visible widespread international engagement and helps reinforce Afghanistan's regional cooperation with its Central Asian neighbors.

¶2. (S) Attempts by the U.S., Canada and the UK to open the door with a limited counternarcotics training project in Kabul were reportedly nixed twice by FM Lavrov during the December 1-2 OSCE Ministerial Conference in Athens. As a result, Russia, again this year, had to forego pursuing OSCE budget resources to train Central Asians and Afghans at the Domodedovo training facility in Moscow. USOSCE provides the following input for the Russia-Afghanistan sub-IPC scheduled December 9 in the hope of contributing to better understanding of Russia's objectives and the way forward. End Summary.

RUSSIA OPPOSED TO OSCE ASSISTANCE FOR AFGHANISTAN'S BORDER SECURITY

¶3. (C) At the OSCE Ministerial Conference in Madrid in December 2007, all 56 participating States approved 16 projects for the OSCE to implement in order to promote greater security for Afghanistan. Fourteen of the projects, which took place inside OSCE Participating States, mostly in Central Asia, have been implemented. Two further projects slated to take place just inside Afghanistan's northern border -- creating a border training facility to focus on customs training at Shir Khan-Bandar and to create mentoring and monitoring teams to assist northern border crossing point -- were blocked by Russia. A Member of the Russian Mission to the OSCE in Vienna told us privately in early October that the MFA had been in favor of the two projects but they were unable to overcome the resistance of other (nfi) agencies in Moscow. Afghanistan's participation in the fourteen projects has been at best uneven either due to a lack of suitable training candidates able to travel outside of the country or the ingrained resistance of neighboring Central Asian states to accommodate Afghan participants. We understand DOD funding (approximately \$4.8 million) provided for the two projects continues to remain available for similar efforts pending approval by OSCE participating States.

A COUNTERNARCOTICS ALTERNATIVE

¶4. (C) Recognizing we were again unlikely to make any headway this year with the Russians on border security activities, we shifted our focus to a high-priority area for Moscow: narcotics trafficking. During preparations for the OSCE Ministerial Conference in Athens December 1-2, Russia proposed a draft ministerial decision on counternarcotics that achieved little except to try and secure central OSCE financial resources for further training at Domodedovo. Working with the UK and Canada, we conditioned our acceptance of the draft decision on Russian agreement to a small OSCE counternarcotics training project in Kabul. After reportedly taking the conditions twice to FM Lavrov, the Russians refused to accept the training project and they withdrew the draft decision from further consideration at the Ministerial.

¶5. (C) OSCE Secretary General Marc Perrin de Brichambaut told us he again tried to convince Lavrov on December 1 to allow the OSCE to perform border security work inside Afghanistan, but Lavrov refused. The SecGen also told us Tajikistan raised the issue and said the Central Asian countries were positive about the idea of OSCE training in Afghanistan. Kyrgyzstan specifically emphasized the importance of working jointly on the borders. The SG recognized that security for civilians and fragmentation of efforts remain valid concerns.

¶6. (S) Comment: Although Russia earlier this year

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approved the deployment of an OSCE Electoral Support Team to Afghanistan, it has consistently refused to allow the OSCE to work on security issues in Afghanistan. Russia's continued objection to any OSCE training inside Afghanistan and its willingness to let its draft counternarcotics decision die rather than accept the small counternarcotics project have exasperated nearly everyone, including the Afghan ambassador to the OSCE who has spoken several times to Russian OSCE ambassador Azimov about the issue. USOSCE was astonished to learn from the Russian delegation that FM Lavrov had raised these issues with the Secretary during a December 1 telephone call. We understand that there will be a Russia-Afghanistan sub-IPC in Washington on December ¶9. We hope that the information above will provide input for a better understanding of Russia's objectives and a decision on the way forward. End comment.

FULLER